

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 05592 150846Z
ACTION SIL-01

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07
LAB-04 NSAE-00 /028 W
-----151006Z 036282 /11
R 150808Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0092

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, TH
SUBJ: ICFTU DELEGATION VISIT TO BANGKOK

1. A SIX-MAN ICFTU DELEGATION HEADED BY ICFTU PRESIDENT P.P. NARAYANAN AND ICFTU ASIAN REGIONAL ORGANIZATION PRESIDENT DR. DEVEN NAIR VISIT BANGKOK MARCH 9 TO 12, 1977. PURPOSE OF THE VISIT WAS TO DEMONSTRATE SOLIDARITY WITH THAI LABOR MOVEMENT AND ASSIST GROUP OF MODERATE THAI LABOR LEADERS IN SEEKING RELAXATION OF RTG RESTRICTIONS ON LABOR ACTIVITIES.
 2. ON THE THAI SIDE, SUNTHON KAEONET, PRESIDENT OF THE EXPRESS TRANSPORT ORGANIZATION, COORDINATED ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE VISIT. HE WAS SUPPORTED BY PHAISAN THAWATCHAINAN, PRESIDENT OF THE METROPOLITAN ELECTRIC AUTHORITY LABOR UNION AND FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE NOW LEGALLY-DEFUNCT THAI LABOR COUNCIL. SUNTHON AND PHAISAN ARE THE WIDELY RECOGNIZED SPOKESMEN FOR A GROUP OF MODERATE LABOR LEADERS, WHOSE POWER-BASE LIES MAINLY IN PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS.
 3. ON MAR. 11 FOLLOWING LENGTHY STRATEGY SESSIONS, ICFTU DELEGATION PLUS SUNTHON AND PHAISAN MADE SERIES OF CALLS ON HIGH-LEVEL THAI OFFICIALS. THEY SAW IN SUCCESSION THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR SUWIT YINGWOROPHAN, THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR
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- PAGE 02 BANGKO 05592 150846Z
- SAMAK SUNTHORAWET, THE PRIME MINISTER THANIN KRAIWICHIAN, AND THE DEPUTY COMMANDER OF SUPREME COMMAND HEADQUARTERS GEN. KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN.
4. ACCORDING TO SUNTHON, LABOR DIRECTOR GENERAL SUWIT "GAVE VERBAL COMMITMENT IN PRINCIPLE THAT LABOR UNIONS WILL BE PERMITTED TO MEET FOR INTERNAL AFFAIRS, I.E., EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS,

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS, LABOR SEMINARS AND CONVENTIONS." NEVERTHELESS, MEETINGS AMONG DIFFERENT UNIONS WILL CONTINUE TO REQUIRE POLICE PERMITS. SUNTHON BELIEVES SUWIT'S COMMITMENT "REFLECTS DECISION AT HIGHER LEVEL"; HOWEVER, TIMING OF OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT IMPLEMENTING THIS CHANGE IN RTG LABOR POLICY WAS LEFT VAGUE.

5. SUNTHON DESCRIBED CALL ON SAMAK AS "COURTESY CALL" WITH "NO COMMITMENTS" MADE ON EITHER SIDE. DURING CALL ON PRIME MINISTER THANIN, THAI LABOR SPOKESMEN REPORTEDLY PROMISED: (1) COOPERATE MORE CLOSELY WITH RTG, (2) SUPPORT "FIGHT AGAINST COMMUNISM" AND (3) ASSIST RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. ICFTU REPRESENTATIVES PROMISED TO SEND ICFTU DIRECTOR OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT TO SURVEY SITUATION AND SUGGEST COOPERATIVE PROJECTS. PM THANIN AGREED TO MEET WITH SUNTHON, PHAISAN AND A LARGER GROUP OF THAI UNION LEADERS DURING WEEK OF MARCH 21 FOR GENERAL EXCHANGES OF VIEWS. SUNTHON REPORTED THAT IN FINAL MEETING OF THE DAY, KRIANGSAK SAID THAT FORMERLY HE "THOUGHT ALL LABOR LEADERS WERE COMMUNISTS." NOW HE KNOWS "LABOR LEADERS ARE FOR THE COUNTRY AND FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT."

6. COMMENT: SUNTHON, PHAISAN AND THEIR SUPPORTERS VIEW ICFTU VISIT AS SIGNIFICANT IN GAINING ACCESS TO RTG LEADERSHIP AND PROMOTING MORE FORTHCOMING RTG ATTITUDE TOWARD ORGANIZED LABOR. LABOR'S OFFER TO ASSIST IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT SEEMS MORE A RESPONSE TO PM'S CURRENT PREOCCUPATION THAN A REFLECTION OF THAI LABOR LEADERS' CURRENT CONCERNS OR RELATIVE COMPETENCE. DEGREE OF RTG'S COMMITMENT TO MORE LIBERALIZED LABOR POLICY IS NOT CLEAR, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF CONFLICTING PRESS REPORTS AND RUMORS. EMBASSY LABOR OFFICER HAS REQUESTED APPOINTMENT WITH DEPUTY DG DEPARTMENT OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BANGKO 05592 150846Z

LABOR WICHIT SAENGTHONG AND WILL ATTEMPT ASCERTAIN MORE DEFINITELY RTG'S PRESENT POLICY ON LABOR.
WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LABOR RELATIONS, VISITS, LABOR OBJECTIVES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 15-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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TAGS: ELAB, TH, ICFTU, (NARAYANAN, P P), (NAIR, DEVEN)
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